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ABSTRACT

The application of behavioral technology to integrate individual needs for growth and development of secondary students with the organizational goals of the schools is discussed. It is emphasized that learning designs in the school should be utilized to give teachers, pupils, and administrators an opportunity in varied group mixes to participate in the study of themselves, discussion of their problems, working out feasible designs in implementing decision modifications, and in evaluating the consequences of this process. The importance of group participation in decision making is stressed. (JD)

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# ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

By
James B. Aiken

Organization Development is a young interdisciplinary approach to developmental change in secondary education. It is still an evolving and dynamic concept that has taken on different meanings for different people. In spite of the diversity, a dominant hopeful outcome of most programs includes more basic attitudinal changes in addition to short range impact changes. The typical OD contract implies a basic proposition that OD works away from a view of man as essentially bad toward a view of man as basically good. This represents directions rather than final goals. In its attempt to modify the macro-systems and intra and inter-group relationships and attitudes, it is dealing more and more with affective aspects of development. Organization Development is not just a movement but a process, a method, and a "program," that stresses the need to involve the students themselves, and to utilize behavioral science learning methodologies and democratic processes. The method enables all technical resources to be channeled to meet and assist the potential power within schools. This method involves education of paid personnel as well as students and considers assessing the roles played, the role change goals and the processes necessary to reach the goals. The "program" method of analysis study-training-action implements appropriate learning designs and emphasizes student, teacher, administrative growth via groups. Integrated and with multi-goals, it is based on the described assessment needs and strsses permanent improvement.

The process of Organization Development certainly includes "projects", but from the O. D. point of view, no single action project is looked upon as the end in itself, but simply a tangible product while developing a deeper spirit of solidarity in student life,

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better problem-solving habits, enriched human relations and the creation of an environment more favorable to learning, and positive well-being of the student and others.

If, for example, action should manifest itself by the establishment of a Teacher/Advisor System for all students, the really important impact on the school is not only the schedule change itself or the fact that a better method of providing an adult friend for students has been established, but also the behavioral modifications and changes in the students and teachers and in the increased spirit of school life in the process of getting and participating in the different orientation to learning how to learn.

To carry the example one step further, assessment may point up the tendency for children to depend on the teacher for making decisions and passively receive the resulting rewards or punishments. Or it may be that children creatively defend against the learning tasks chosen by the teacher which may result in subtle or direct hostility or rebellious behavior. It may take the form of acting stupid, clowning, laziness, or daydreaming which lead to negative attitudes toward self and school. Among other symptoms are: engaging in name-calling; reluctance to work in groups; unconcern for working with others who are "different;" and dependence on authorities. (Someday we are going to have to face the issue of who's responsible for students not taking the responsibility for their own learning) Teaching in a manner that facilitates dealing with such assessments requires a teacher with a clear understanding of own values and processes of learning - own and student.

The need for innovation in secondary schools calls for an experimental approach and an experiential understanding of better interpersonal linkages and processes of change. If we are to do anything significant about the problems of stagnating high schools, inadequate induction of youth into the adult world, difficulties in communication, and inadequate support for programs in the schools, we will have to become more effective in assessing social and psychological forces at work in school and provide more adequate training

with developmental problems in the schools. Good intentions and valid information do not necessarily lead automatically to resolving the problems. It has been said that we know more than we do.

Proof of developmental effectiveness is not in new projects themselves but in people unwilling to tolerate inadequacies and seeking more satisfying dimensions to school life. Students and teachers spend much of their lives in groups, yet we have not utilized our know-how to help them develop the skills and insight of self-expression in groups, and of interaction processes.

Organization Development is more than a bag of tricks, exercises, games etc. It is more than bringing to the school a preconceived "program" or proposed form of democratic processes. It is "people" development. The consultant seeks not only to develop patterns of communications, to work closely with groups, to link resources, and to build into school and group structures a problem-solving process, but also to relate himself in meaningful ways which may include various types of training as the situation demands.

In Organization Development operations, on-going learning designs in the school should be utilized to give all personnel a genuine opportunity in varied group mixes to participate in the study of themselves, in discussion of their problems, in working out reasonable, intelligent, and feasible designs in implementing decision modifications, and in evaluating the consequences of this process. It is aimed to help (1) assess situational needs by careful self-study; (2) focus and refocus on aspirations for the school in every area of common life; (3) achieve new levels of participation in school life and in making school decisions; (4) utilize varied and flexible democratic structures to work school

problems through and to take action (realizing that the structure is a function of the action and not vice versa); (5) open channels of communication in the school so that constructive interaction can take place among and between all persons, elements, factions, and interests in the school; (6) achieve new levels of intergroup understanding and collaboration among all groups in the school; and (7) achieve new levels of self-reliance and voluntary cooperation in the school.

Administrators alone cannot solve school problems. Students and teachers need to learn innovative social means for dealing with ever-present situations, exchanging ideas, educating themselves, and working through the issues of concern to student welfare. The skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary cannot be learned without opportunities for experimentation, demonstration, and trial in real school life situations. Consequently, consultants help create many opportunities in which new information and skills can be tried and tested in experience. An aim should be to create a school atmosphere stimulating students and teachers to be more aware of their own creative ability and to work toward a more effective structure for expressing quality and ability.

Often a school attempting to initiate a program suffers constant perturbation from a few significant members. Why not openly admit that they are present and deal with them? We can do this, it seems, or ignore the prime issue. If there are resistances within the school, why not learn to recognize them, utilize them as forces at work so that they can be dealt with intelligently? Participants in the O. D. processes have described profound changes on the groups and perceived self, during the on-going constructive changes in school norms and attitudes while bringing the school closer to becoming a well-functioning ever-experimenting learning group.

The planning of a change program should include the application of a collaboratively designed procedure for assessment by the students and teachers themselves. This includes an assessment of the possibilities and limitations for change, a method for collaboratively developing an action plan for initiating and maintaining the developmental change and an inbuilt continuous evaluation and replanning as the change effort progresses.

To move immediately from a superficial diagnosis of a change problem to the action steps does not make for a lasting relationship. A more thorough working-through process of assessing the forces of the situation will produce more effective results with fewer tensions in the system.

The kind of general change worked toward is an educational process intended to help schools become self-developing. This implies, at least that the kind of change sought is growth development of the school -- not growth in size but growth toward increased assessing abilities, patterns of behavior, and problem-solving effectiveness; that the focus of the effort is to encourage choices which hopefully will effect lasting change at the level of the student as well as concomitant changes at other levels; and that a basic criterion of a successful change effort is the improvement in the kind and quality of learning experiences encouraged by the school over an extended period of time.

However more short-run criteria by which movement toward a self-developing state can be gauged are as follows: (1) the effectiveness of the method of meeting and solving problems by the groups and organizations in the school. (2) an enabling norm climate and reward system which facilitates the cooperation and collaboration effort among groups, and personnel. (3) the action procedures and events are reasonable enough for the goals of the group and school to be reached. (4) the way goals of students and teachers are linked, (5) and the level of motivation students and teachers accomplish while arriving at mutually agreed upon goals.

Observation of a school during its life reveals personnel are recurrently confronted with such issues as how to get appropriate mixes together to develop goals, how effectively to manage development of students and teachers toward mutually agreed-upon goals and tasks, how to be aware of and deal effectively with teacher and groups with their complex roles, vested interests, biases and their feeling-self emotions, and how to maintain integrity from within school life. These issues find expression through current assessments. A second observation is that the norm patterns change during the school's life; the standards which permit possible content, tasks, and feelings are continually evolving. These progressive shifts in group norm patterns can broaden the school's self-renewing change possibilities as the school development effort goes on. These enabling norms are likely to allow the students and teachers to express more intelligently feelings about tasks, decision-making processes, one another, significant others, and the consultant so that restraining forces can be more intelligently and helpfully managed. One view of school may be stated like this: The development "program" of a school from its inception is characterized by the occurence and recurrence of skillfully or unskillfully managing restraining forces and planning achievable events under progressively expanding norm conditions.